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Critics'

THEATRE REVIEWS

1942

INDEX

Stage Play	Pages
All in Favor	380, 381, 382
All the Comforts of Home	280, 281, 282
Autumn Hill	314, 315, 316
†*Broken Journey	265, 266, 267
*By Jupiter	274, 275, 276
Cafe Crown	370, 371, 372, 373
Candida	301, 302, 303
†Cat Screams (The)	270, 271, 272
Comes the Revelation	278, 279, 280
First Crocus (The)	397, 398, 399
Flowers of Virtue (The)	354, 355, 356
*Guest in the House	336, 337, 338
Harlem Cavalcade	296, 297, 298
Heart of a City	346, 347, 348
Hedda Gabler	358, 359, 360, 361
Jason	377, 378, 379, 380
Johnny on a Spot	391, 392, 393
Johnny 2X4	326, 327, 328
Keep 'Em Laughing	306, 307, 308
Kiss for Cinderella (A)	332, 333, 334

Stage Play	Pages
Lady Comes Across	388, 389, 390
†*Laugh, Town, Laugh!	268, 269, 270
Life of Reilly (The)	298, 299, 300
Lily of the Valley	365, 366, 367, 368
Moon Is Down (The)	318, 319, 320
Nathan the Wise	321, 323, 323
Papa Is All	394, 395, 396
Plan M	342, 343, 344
*Porgy and Bess	373, 374, 375, 376
*Priorities of 1942	329, 330, 331
Rivals (The)	384, 385, 386, 387
Solitaire	382, 383, 384, 385
†*Star and Garter	262, 263, 264
The Strings, My Lord, Are False	287, 288, 289
They Should Have Stood in Bed	349, 350, 351
Top-Notchers (Keep 'Em Laughing)	306, 307, 308
*Uncle Harry	284, 285, 286
Under This Roof	339, 340, 341
Walking Gentleman (The)	292, 293, 294
What Big Ears	309, 310
Yesterday's Magic	312, 313, 314

PRODUCTIONS CONTINUING

Reviews appeared in the 1941 CRITICS' THEATRE REVIEWS

Stage Play	1941 Vol. Pages
*Angel Street	182, 183, 184, 185
*Arsenic and Old Lace	417, 418, 419, 420
*Best Foot Forward	286, 287, 288, 289
*Blithe Spirit	237, 238, 239, 240
*Claudia	378, 379, 380, 381

Stage Play	1941 Vol. Pages
*Junior Miss	211, 212, 213, 214
*Let's Face It	249, 250, 251, 252
*Life With Father	489, 490, 491
*My Sister Eileen	445, 446, 447
*Sons o' Fun	193, 194, 195, 196

**Asterisks indicate shows scheduled to play during the week of June 29, 1942.*
†"The Cat Screams" opened Tuesday, June 16th, at the Martin Beck Theatre.
†"Laugh, Town, Laugh!" opened Monday, June 22nd, at the Alvin Theatre.
†"Broken Journey" opened Tuesday, June 23rd, at Henry Miller's Theatre.
†"Star and Garter" opened Wednesday, June 24th, at the Music Box Theatre.

THEATRE REVIEWS IS A COMPLETE GUIDE AND RECORD TO THE NEW YORK SHOWS

Critics' Theatre Reviews brings you each week the complete reviews as they originally appeared in these New York papers

NEW YORK SUN
NEW YORK POST
NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
NEW YORK NEWSPAPER "PM"
NEW YORK TIMES
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN

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"Star and Garter"

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN
June 25, 1942

'Star and Garter' Opens at Music Box

Bobby Clark and Gypsy Rose Lee Head Cast of Michael Todd's New Revue

By JOHN ANDERSON

MR. TODD brought the season's most anatomical spectacle to the Music Box last night, and while its bodyworks are handsome and well displayed, it is, I regret to report, deficient in other departments. In fact, if its title means anything at all, "Star and Carter" could do with much more twinkle and a lot more snap, for while it enjoys the celebrated services of Bobby Clark and Gypsy Rose Lee, authoress and strippist, its humor seems scantier than its costumes and twice as suggestive.

Mr. Todd has stinted on nothing except the imagination, and he has left very little to that. His stately dames seem to be structurally accurant and visually admirable, and they disclose their haughty charms in the pretty peek-a-boos of Miss Sharaff's beguiling costumes. The trouble with nudity as public entertainment is that it tends to become monotonous, and there were times when it seemed that "Star and Garter" needed merely a surveyor to measure its acreage of obliging exposure.

Since Mr. Todd conducted "The Streets of Paris" and "Gay New Orleans" at the Flushing Fair with resounding success, he may know what the public wants. Certainly "Star and Garter" is not exactly revue, burlesque or good old vaudeville.

Entertaining Items

In its more burlesque moments it relies on the dubious elegance of a sort of diamond-studded G-string vulgarity. As vaudeville, it has the amusing assistance of Prof. Lamberti, the goofy xylophonist, with a leering strip-tease attachment, and such entertaining items as Gil Maison and his dogs, the extraordinary acrobatics of Wayne and Marlin, and the marvellous "drunk" tumbling of Frank and Jean Hubert.

It is in its more or less revue aspects that it is not very bright. "In the Malamute Saloon" is somewhat below standard, and Mr. Clark's two other major efforts lack the necessary comic force and invention. His "Robert the Roue, from Reading, Pa.," revived from "Streets of Paris," hasn't the haughty mischief it had in its original showing, and the "Aired in Court" doesn't quite make the grade for the time it takes. For a star comedian, Mr. Clark doesn't get the necessary build-up either in material or presentation, and since he is one of the funniest men on the stage when he has the opportunity, I hold him personally blameless.

Even Miss Lee's tease seemed routine, and the patter that goes with it less amusing than it used to be, unless my ears are more deceptive than my eyes, which assured me that Miss Lee was o.k. in health and contour, suggesting, perhaps, the general lament of the show that the flesh was willing but the spirit weak.

Graceful Tune

Musically there isn't much to report. Mr. Rome has supplied a graceful tune with somewhat soiled lyrics called "The Bunny," and Mr. Berlin has contributed a dullish piece for a full-stage number, "The Girl on the Police Gazette." "The Harem" is a stupid number, designed to high-light the peculiar, if clinical, physical dexterity of Carrie Finnell, who seemed funnier somehow in the larger-scale and broad-beamed humors of "Gay New Orleans."

Though staged by Hassard Short in gay settings by Harry Horner, the new show never seems to use its head or stand on its feet. Its interests are tiresomely belt-line, more midway, so to speak, than Broadway.

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
June 25, 1942

By Any Other Name

By RICHARD WATTS, JR.

BEING a deep thinker as well as a smart showman, Michael Todd has figured out what it was that got burlesque into trouble. It was, he feels, the low admission scale and the lack of costly settings. Since he is likewise a man of action, Mr. Todd decided to do something about the situation. So he raised the prices to the customary Broadway musical-show level, bought some expensive scenery and a lot of lavish but brief costumes and now offers us a handsome and rowdy entertainment which he calls in full Michael Todd's "Star and Garter." With such eminent performers as Bobby Clark, Gypsy Rose Lee and a wonderful man called Professor Lamberti in leading roles and a group of daring girls in various unabashed attitudes, this "Star and Garter" is rough, funny and unashamed.

* * *

Mr. Todd's show is decidedly not for the squeamish. In some cases I would go further than that and add that in parts it is not for those who bother about taste at all. For most of the time, though, it is, in its cheerfully abandoned way, as comic as it is audacious. As every one throughout the civilized world must know by now, Bobby Clark is one of the funniest men in the history of mankind, and "Star and Garter" permits him to frolic freely. This Mr. Clark can be pretty rough when he sets his mind to it, but there is no escaping his superb comic talent. His sketches are not always masterpieces, but they do give him a beautifully free hand and he takes advantage of them magnificently. Whether as a grim miner from the Klondike, a murder-trial judge armed with spitballs, a candy butcher, a fellow fleeing from Gypsy Rose Lee's husband or a roue from Reading, Pa., he is a joy.

* * *

This Professor Lamberti belongs among the giants, too. Perhaps you have seen him before. He is the slyly disreputable-looking gentleman, the proud possessor of what Noel Coward has called an air of seedy grandeur, who cheerfully plays away at his xylophone, happy in the conviction that the audience is cheering his fine touch while all the time a strip-tease lady is giving of her art somewhere behind him. His is perhaps a fairly limited act, but I have seen it many times and each time it seems to me more tremendously funny. Like all first-rate comics, Professor Lamberti grows on you with added acquaintance, although, heaven knows, he is hilarious enough the first time you see him. Alas, like so many other classic clowns, the good professor has the advantage of a winningly raffish personality. Altogether he is quite a wonderful man.

* * *

The celebrated Miss Lee, who has not only written books but read them, is, of course, the most dignified of strip-tease experts. Going about the business of disrobing in aloof and lofty fahsion, which gives her performance something of the quality of a sacerdotal rite, she manages to appeal with equal effectiveness to the old-school burlesque fans and the gentlemen of extreme culture. It is just possible that this reviewer belongs to neither category. Anyway, for those who like hotter stripping, there is Georgia Sothern, and for those who have far, far hardier tastes than mine, there is Carrie Finnell, a bulky girl here and there. There is even a moment of effective sentiment in an Irving Berlin number, "The Girl on the Police Gazette." The production is not only lavish but frequently colorful and attractive. "Star and Garter" is burlesque grown fancy but retaining its sense of humor.

NEW YORK NEWSPAPER "PM"
June 25, 1942

Burlesque Puts On the Ritz

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

BURLESQUE, the fast woman and fallen sister of the theater, swept into the Music Box Wednesday night all done up in silks and ermine. For a glimpse of her, a good many highly respectable citizens paid $6.60, and the chances are that they did not regret it. With Bobby Clark and Gypsy Rose Lee on hand to act out the title, *Star and Garter* is a leg-and-laugh show with considerable lure and plenty of good filthy fun.

If it doesn't make a lady of burlesque, it turns her into about the highest-stepping floozy that Broadway has seen in a long time. There's a daisy of a chorus which Irene Sharaff has dressed scantily, but gorgeously, while Harry Horner has splashed the sets with color. If the show itself is largely put together with old Michael Todd-ments (from the *Streets of Paris* on) a lot of it is fun and most of it is serviceable. Miss Lee, the most cultured as well as the most charming of strip teasers, provides the show with a very nice leading lady. And Master Clark continues to be one of the great blessings of the theater.

It doesn't matter very much what he does. From his first entrance, where he is trapped in a lady's bedroom and moans: "Why did I ever leave the Theatre Guild?" 'til he winds up as the judge in a balmy murder trial, he never stops performing his zany capers, executing his crazy little steps, or darting his wild looks through those famous painted specs. At one time he's a Klondike miner who looks more than anything else like Elbert Hubbard; at another time he is once again Robert the Roué from Reading, Pa.; but at all times he's a delightful clown.

On the laugh side, too, is Prof. Lamberti with his looney xylophone act, which has grown on me with the years. (I think part of the appeal of vaudeville in its prime must have been seeing the same acts over and over again, and enjoying their showmanship long after you knew their gags by heart.)

There are other good numbers: Wayne and Marlin's strong-man act; a couple of girls called the Hudson Wonders, who do some astonishing acrobatic dancing; a ballet number to which Bill Skipper and Kate Friedlich lend a gay twist with a comic *pas de deux*; and a first act finale reminiscent of Irving Berlin's *Easter Parade* which is perhaps the all-time high in pink-and-black jobs.

Possibly family parties which include the impressionable young should leave after the intermission, for in the second act *Star and Garter* lets its hair down. There are a couple of decidedly anatomical dances, and an assortment of equally anatomical quips, to remind you that burlesque is burlesque whether in fine feathers or tawdry ones. On the whole, however, *Star and Garter* is fleshed with style rather than suggestiveness, aims at the glamorous rather than the gamy; and for these warm months—though the season really hasn't much to do with it—offers an entertaining evening.

"Star and Garter"

NEW YORK POST
June 25, 1942

Bobby Clark and Gypsy Rose Lee in Michael Todd's "Star and Garter"

By WILELLA WALDORF

WITH all the low-priced burlesque shows shuttered by Commissioner Moss, presumably for the duration, Michael Todd has decided to glorify the strip-tease by surrounding it with the spangled luxury of an elaborate Broadway revue.

Mr. Todd's "Star and Garter," produced last night at the Music Box Theatre, is opulently staged by Hassard Short and provided with handsome scenery by Harry Horner, while Irene Sharaff has lavished some of her most attractive colors and textures on costumes designed for statuesque females to remove a little at a time.

No connoisseur of burlesque, we must confess that the old disrobing act, even when performed by Gypsy Rose Lee, becomes a trifle monotonous after the first half hour or so, nor is it possible to interest us indefinitely in a procession of young women with beautiful bodies parading around the stage dressed in a couple of rosebuds and a string of beads.

By the time they have gone through the same routine in black net brassieres and gauze scanties, it is time to begin hunting through the program to see when Bobby Clark is due again, or what sort of dog act the evening will bring forth.

No musical show produced on Broadway of late is complete without a dog act. Gil Maison's dogs in "Star and Garter" are very talented, and he varies the performance a bit by introducing an athletic monkey.

Bobby Clark Lacks Good Skits

But Bobby Clark has not been treated right by the sketch writers, or were there any? Do not most of the skits arise somewhat unsteadily from the ashes of past shows? Bobby Clark is one of the funniest fellows alive, but he is forced to spend most of his time in mediocre foolishness, hiding in a trunk when the lady's husband returns unexpectedly, or presiding at a murder trial that is being broadcast on a coast-to-coast hook-up.

Mr. Clark is amazingly comic though handicapped by poor material, but even he can't put over some of the duller numbers. They were so hard up for a song that "Robert the Roue from Reading, Pa." has been dug up from one of his earlier revues, "Streets of Paris," wasn't it?

It seems to us that a big Broadway musical charging $4.40 for its best seats ($6.60 at the premiere) ought to provide something reasonably new for its leading comedian. This sort of thing is more in line with the current vogue for "bringing back vaudeville" at popular prices.

The Girl on the Police Gazette

Nevertheless "Star and Garter" is an entertaining show at least half the way, though it does begin to pall very definitely after the intermission. Some of the elaborate full-stage numbers are staggering to behold, being presented in Mr. Short's smartest manner. The first act finale, featuring Miss Lee as the Girl on the Police Gazette, is particularly fetching. The song featured is an old one by Irving Berlin equipped with new lyrics for the occasion.

Among the numerous vaudeville and night club acts presented while the beauties are in their dressing rooms putting on costumes which they will presently take off, are a remarkable acrobatic exhibition by Wayne and Marlin, done in slow motion, and clever stepping by the Hudson Wonders.

Prof. Lamberti, who loses his pants and tears a xylophone apart; Frank and Jean Hubert in a drunk rough-and-tumble, and Lynn, Royce and Vanya with their take-off on adagio dancing also help to keep things moving.

Gypsy Rose Lee's major number features her song about how difficult it is to do a strip act to classical music entitled "I Can't Strip to Brahms."

"Star and Garter" is beyond doubt the most opulent burlesque show ever produced, but we are still a little sore at the treatment accorded Bobby Clark. When he is forced to hide in a trunk in the skit about the husband's unexpected return, he shouts: "Oh, why did I ever leave the Theatre Guild?"

Why indeed? The Guild may not have waxed very brilliant of late, but one of its authors, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, provided Bobby with a better part than Michael Todd does.

"STAR AND GARTER"

Michael Todd's revue, presented on June 24, 1942, at the Music Box Theatre. Production staged by Hassard Short. Dances directed by Al White Jr. Settings by Harry Horner. Costumes by Irene Sharaff. Conductor, Raymond Sinatra. The cast:

Bobby Clark, Gypsy Rose Lee, Prof. Lamberti, Pat Harrington, Carrie Finnell, Georgia Sothern, Joe Lyons, Eppy (Tiny) Pearson, Juanita Rios, Wayne and Marlin, Leticia, Gil Maison, LaVerne Lupton, Marjorie Knapp, The Hudson Wonders, Frank Price, Lynn, Royce and Vanya, Frank and Jean Hubert, Richard Rober, Bill Skipper, Kate Friedlich.

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
June 25, 1942

"Star and Garter" a Revealing Revival of All-Time Burlesque

Michael Todd's "Star and Garter," burlesque revue assembled and produced by Mr. Todd at the Music Box, New York, June 24, 1942.

★ ★ ★

By BURNS MANTLE

FRANKNESS is probably the dominant note of Michael Todd's "Star and Garter," the new burlesque show at the Music Box. A frankness touched with reminiscence. Including a touch of the late Florenz Ziegfeld. A touch of the formerly active Brothers Minsky.

A nostalgic touch of New York's lamented World's Fair, and the "Streets of Paris" that gave that never-to-be-forgotten exhibit an added touch.

More than a touch of Gypsy Rose Lee and her revealing art. (And if you don't think it's art you are a trifle touched yourself.)

A touch of Bobby Clark in his pre-classic mood. A touch of Carrie Finnell, the muscular dairy maid.

The Hassard Short touch is in evidence in the girl and color displays; the Irene Sharaff touch in the costumes that range from wisps of chiffon to billows of silk; the Harry Horner touch in scenery built on a foundation of heroic ladies' legs and garters.

Good to Be Honest

Well, if burlesque is coming back, along with vaudeville, there is every reason why it should be treated with complete frankness. I am glad to report that Mr. Todd has pulled no punches and only the trickier G-strings.

As burlesque, "Star and Garter" is a good show. There is about everything in it that the old-time wheels and beef-trust circuits have contributed to what is often laughingly referred to as the legitimate theatre.

The sketch about the husband who frightens the comedian into hiding in the trunk, itself a happy burlesque of burlesque. The sidewalk conversations about the girls and how to subdue them.

Dances that are full of anatomical twists and emotional bumps that have been known to excite licence commissioners as well as refined but curious ladies from Dubuque.

Amazon marches with stately dames covered here and there with rhinestones, rice powder and an air of complete confidence in their miniature girdles.

And a Boy Tenor

Startling acrobatics, introducing heavily muscled men and amazingly contortionistic women. Even a boy tenor in Frank Price, the likes of whom we have neither seen nor heard since Al Jolson was singing in somebody's gallery for 50 cents a show. "The Girl on the Police Gazette" is Frank's song, and very melodious, too.

Songs of questionable taste sung with some regard for taste by Marjorie Knapp, and no regard for anything much, including the law and her sacroiliac, by Georgia Sothern.

Still, I repeat, as burlesque "Star and Garter" is a good show. Prof. Lamberti, his xylophone and his personal stripteaser, had the crowd laughing immoderately, though teasing being the theme of the show this bit lacked its usual amusing contrast.

Bobby Clark was riotous in all his sketches, and never funnier in any stage courtroom. His illustration of "In the Malamute Saloon," with Gypsy as the girl named Lou, was great fun, and he sang "Robert the Roue" with gusto and some added words that may and may not stay in.

Last night's crowd was large, eager and boastfully shocked. As your pastor I warn you that if it's burlesque you like, here it is in a rich setting. If it's burlesque you hate and deplore, keep away from the Music Box.

"Star and Garter"

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
June 25, 1942

Burlesque Is Back— But Super-Duper

By GEORGE ROSS

PERK up, gents, it's still around and in bigger bulk than the Freres Minsky ever dished it out. You may thank Michael Todd. A happy-go-lucky rolling stone, Michael Todd gathers no Moss of the license variety. What the Little White Father banished in 42nd St. Michael Todd beknighted last night in 45th St. in Star and Garter at the Music Box, namely, Burlesque. The ghosts who walk the Eltinge, the Republic and the Gaiety must be jubilant today, for a champion has been discovered. To the cause of the strip-tease, the body bump and the double entendre Producer Todd has made a most opulent contribution.

It would turn the Brothers Minsky green or magenta, perhaps, with envy. To see that for which they shattered many a lance on the fringes of City Hall surrounded by so much pulchritude, in such expensive luxury and colorful finery and received warmly without so much as the slight elevation of an eyebrow should have caused those wholesale purveyors of deshabille to wince. For Star and Garter is what the gents always wanted, only it is 50 times that which they were accustomed to receive.

* * *

A Superduper Girlicue

It is a superduper girlicue, indeed. Think of an epidermis-glorifying extravaganza that is staged by Hassard Short and lighted by him, too, that Gypsy Rose Lee (the author) and Bobby Clark; that is unclothed in splendor by Irene Sharaff; that is inhabited by some of the most lovely women who inhabit Manhattan and that looked like a million dollars, thanks to the settings by Harry Horner, and you have something to set the traveling man on his ear, if not on his sample cases.

Conceded that the broadness of the humor which used to fill wide gaps in 42nd St. has been taken in a little, or that one stripper or the other is a wee bit less generous than she used to be or that the boudoir blackout is on this side of shameless ribaldry. It, nevertheless, is all there, and let it not be said in evidence that the carriage trade last night turned up its noses.

Yes, there is not one strip-tease queen in Star and Garter, but three or four at a rough guess. How will you have it? In the style of Georgia Sothern, with the bricktop hair and the gyrations of a whirling dervish? Or in the manner of Carrie Finnell who, so rumor goes, once gave blush to a salesman in a front row? Or would you prefer to witness this most specialized of all the arts as it is interpreted by the star of Star and Garter, Miss Gypsy herself, who puts a literary quality into her work that has even touched the book critics? Take your choice.

It is no accident that Producer Todd drew his inspiration while vaudeville was enjoying a rebirth, for burlesque and vaudeville always went hand in glove, and so they do in Star and Garter. What is incongrueous about Gil Maison emerging with a pack of recalcitrant dogs and a peevish monkey between scenes of unveiled comeliness? Or Professor Lamberti's xylophone concert? Or Wayne and Marlin's strongarm display of the flexing of muscles? They belong there, as part of the variety and as naturally as Bobby Clark belongs there, with his steam-engine stogie and abbreviated cane and painted-on eyeglasses, in one skit or another, some of them funny, some of them fair-to-maudlin and some of them pretty terrible.

* * *

Spectacle and Song

But the best part of Producer Todd's prodigality is visible in the spectacle numbers, among which you ought to remember one entitled Les Syiphide avec la Bumpe if only for its title, and another itemed as The Girl on the Police Gazette if only because it is an old Irving Berlin song number and reminded not a few of last night's retentive minds of a another Berlin song entitled Easter Parade. Not the least of the evening's bright incidents was the way Marjorie Knapp, who is unfamiliar around here, sang Harold J. Rome's new and probably naughty ditty entitled Bunny.

Well, that's a general outline of the show that Michael Todd bestowed upon the town at the Music Box last evening. The first-night audience for the most part let it be apparent that they relished it and whatever dissenters there may have been in the house held their tongues. Perhaps Star and Garter could be a whole lot brighter in a few places and certainly the sketches would have welcomed improvement. But what traditional burlesque did not have its dead spots and its repetitious moments? You can't accuse Mr. Todd of not having championed the cause, anyway.

NEW YORK TIMES
June 25, 1942

'Star and Garter,' Burlesque With Bobby Clark and Gypsy Rose Lee Heading Cast, Has Premiere at the Music Box

LIKELY it was the sight of those dark and shuttered houses along Forty-second Street that stirred in Mike Todd some dim, nostalgic memory of a far happier day. Being a demoniac fellow from away back, he swung instantly into action, and the burlesque which License Commissioner Moss lately tore asunder he quietly restored, like humpty-dumpty to the wall. For his cast he found Bobby Clark, ex the Theatre Guild—also ex burlesque—and Gypsy Rose Lee of belles lettres. Scouring the roster of a vanishing art, he found Georgia Sothern and others, and with Hassard Short to stage the whole, he offered it under the title of "Star and Garter" last evening at the Music Box.

High up on the rafters over the stage, those ghosts which haunt the Music Box must have spent an agile evening dodging the blue flames, for "Star and Garter" is sultry. Like its predecessors of Forty-second Street, it goes in for songs with one meaning of the printed word and nine others lurking slyly behind every sharp. It goes in, too, for the female figure divine, and while the first night audience didn't come right out and yell to take 'em off, it can never say it wasn't urged. And, also like the burlesque it part parodies and part admires, "Star and Garter" lacks comedy. A dull bit of business it is, on the whole.

Early in the show, Bobby Clark remarked about something else, "Why did I ever leave the Theatre Guild?" and towards the end of the evening he most clearly had something there. Sketch A: "The Sacred Gherkin," old not funny. Sketch B: "That Merry Wife of Windsor," the one about the husband coming home, slightly relieved by the fact that Bobby was not the husband. Sketch C: "In the Malamute Saloon," from another show. Sketch D: "Aired in Court," or the trial scene which has been in every burlesque show since Eve was taking 'em off, relieved on this particular occasion by the fact that Judge Clark is a very funny fellow.

As to the rest, Miss Lee is in "Star and Garter" mainly as an actress; in only one number is she reminiscent of the Great Lady of the Stage which formerly was her role a bit south of Forty-fifth Street. Miss Sothern, who has her public, too, is there for one moment only, but she is unpretentiously hot stuff, and that is that. Surrounding these stars of major magnitude are those of lesser degree, and some of them—vaudeville folk, mainly—are excellent. Among them are Professor Lamberti, the mad xylophone player, who has been around these parts before; Gil Maison, with a marvelous dog and monkey act; Wayne and Marlin, who are strong men-acrobats; Frank and Jean Hubert, dancer-acrobats.

Mr. Short, whose eye for staging always is even, has turned out a couple of good production numbers, one being "The Girl on the Police Gazette," which is set to the tune of Irving Berlin's "Easter Parade," with new words by Mr. Berlin. The music, by various people, is generally not very good, being mainly a frame in which to set most dubious lyrics. Harry Horner designed the settings, which are striking, and Irene Sharaff—with the assistance of a bountiful nature—did the costumes. On the whole, "Star and Garter" seemed just a bit like a night-club floor show, along about 2:30 in the morning, and on one of the side streets.

L. N.

NEW YORK SUN
June 25, 1942

The 'Star and Garter' Revue Arrives at the Music Box Theater

BROADWAY got its first look at streamlined burlesque last evening as Michael Todd brought his "Star and Garter" revue into the Music Box and loved it. Staged by Hassard Short with all his gift for color and lighting, Mr. Todd's production proves a fast moving, sumptuous, dazzling and lusty show.

From the time Gypsy Rose Lee leads her Star and Garter girls onto the stage at the curtain's rise until she and Bobby Clark and their glamorous cohorts begin tossing some promised prizes into the audience at the finish, there is plenty of action and plenty to catch the eye. Also there is a definite indication that some of the persons responsible for the production had once visited 42d Street and heard of a certain gentleman named Minsky.

The show abounds in laughs, too. Heading the list of comedians, of course, is Bobby Clark, an alumnus long ago of this sort of show, and now apparently taking a post-graduate course. Whether he is hiding in a trunk, helping Gypsy Rose Lee demonstrate what Robert Service really meant when he wrote about Dan McGrew, peddling candy with his eyebrows raised even a bit higher than usual in a knowing look, or blowing spitballs at the witnesses, attorneys and jury while conducting Miss Lee's murder trial, he is funny in his own bland style. And to us, at least, the court room scene, with all its slapstick antics, was the most hilarious thing in the show. Also in case you enjoy hearing Mr. Clark divest himself of a patter song, he warbles a number about "Robert the Roue From Reading, Pa."

Right up there at the top also when it comes to laughs is Prof. Lamberti with his xylophone and swirling tongue. His feigned innocence of the fact that Dorothy Digby is parading behind him while he hammers out a tune is a neat bit of pantomime and clowning and a neat bit of musicianship, too.

The highly durable team of Frank and Jean Hubert, with their rough-and-tumble drunk act, and Lynn, Royce and Vanya in their gymnastic burlesque of ballroom dancing also do their part in contributing to the robust comedy with which the show is amply besprinkled.

Hassard Short has designed some gorgeous settings for several of the numbers. His harem scene is a masterpiece of showmanship and lighting, and the reproduction of the old-time burlesque house for the background of Irving Berlin's "Girl on the Police Gazette" song, which brings the first act to a close, is not only clever, but tasteful. And the "Blues in the Night" background is lovely also. Needless to say, the big chorus of girls, who have more than a little to do with the evening's events, are lovely, too.

As for Miss Lee, she is much in the foreground all evening. She participates in most of the skits and, in case you are interested, she also sings a number entitled "I Can't Strip to Brahms."

Incidentally, that rustling noise reported at the corner of Broadway and 47th Street along about 11 o'clock last night was the ghost of the old Columbia Theater, turning over a couple of times at the news of the high antics in 45th Street.

HERRICK BROWN.

"Broken Journey"

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN
June 24, 1942

'Broken Journey' Based On War Tale

By JOHN ANDERSON

WHAT would happen, Mr. Andrew Rosenthal wonders in "Broken Journey," which opened at Henry Miller's last night, if a famous radio war correspondent returned on a triumphant lecture tour to his home town, found the love of his life free to marry him, and a nice, comfortable job on the local paper? What would happen, Mr. Rosenthal wonders if the aforesaid correspondent had to choose between the pleasant easy life and the excitement, strain, and danger of battlefronts? He would, Mr. Rosenthal concludes, after three dreary acts, leap into action at the drop of a kilocycle.

This problem, I fear, plainly interests Mr. Rosenthal more than he is able to interest his audience, for in spite of the solemn quotation at the very end of Tom Paine's famous passage about "the Summer soldier and the sunshine patriot," his play seems rambling, tedious, pointless, shallow and unconvincing. I couldn't see what difference it made whether Mr. Correspondent rushed off to the Philippines or not (especially after hearing a specimen broadcast) and the play left me caring less than half a hoot.

Though I am aware that war correspondents perform valuable services under great difficulty and at serious personal risk, Mr. Rosenthal's play seems to have delusions of grandeur about them and considerable scorn for all those unfortunate persons who are not so gallantly occupied.

It implies smugly, in a set of vapid caricatures, that the average citizen doesn't know what a terrible mess the world is in, and that a group of civilians sitting around listening to Christmas carols on Christmas eve, after Pearl Harbor, are to be sneered at as stupid, if not downright unpatriotic.

For the playwright has stacked his cards heavily against the poor civilian, who can probably stand that along with the rest. Not one of the persons shown in the play seemed to have any relative or friend in the armed services; their talk of war work was carefully silly and their innocence bordered on the idiotic. You might even be forgiven the impression that the war was being fought by noble correspondents anxious to save the world at so much per broadcast.

If Mr. Rosenthal had left his play frankly a story of a personal dilemma in the life of a war correspondent, it would have been on safer ground, though perhaps just as tiresome. For actually the personal complications seem as ungrounded as the rest. The war correspondent has been traveling around the storm centers for years with a widowed lady correspondent and her nine-year-old daughter, on a mutual basis of professional and personal interest, so that when he is tempted to settle down the decision involves not only his work but his emotions. Just to clinch the argument Mr. Rosenthal makes the local girl his correspondent wants to marry an incredible dimwit, flighty and irresponsible.

These and the other characters seem cut out of something even less solid than cardboard, something like pure mush. As first aids to characterization Mr. Rosenthal has the obvious trick of letting the people tell one another bluntly what sort of people they are. The lady correspondent, for instance, is told that she wants to interview Stalin and win the Nobel Prize.

In the face of such writing I don't know what any actors could have done, and most of the players in the present cast seemed hopelessly defeated by the dialogue. Zita Johann was tempted into some rather Balmy Betsy work as the small town girl who almost roped the big correspondent and Edith Atwater was forced into an unendurably superior attitude as the lady journalist panting for the battle, or, as she would say, vice versa. Tom Powers, with a mess of hesitant exits on his hands, did his best to humanize a coy poop, and Phyllis Povah makes the most of a Helen Hokinson club-woman who is, at least, consistent.

Warner Anderson, with the central character on his hands in a play which seemed to have no exact center, supplies an honest and straightforward portrait of a part which seemed definitely transcribed, or written with an old phonograph needle.

Mr. Hopkins has tried to shape the action, and give it timing and emphasis, but it must have been a good deal like trying to run a spelling bee in a bowl of alphabet soup.

'BROKEN JOURNEY'

A new play by Andrew Rosenthal in three acts. Staged by Arthur Hopkins, producton designed by Raymond Sovey, presented by Martin Burton at Henry Miller's Theater, June 23, 1942. The cast:

Hale Thatcher	Tom Powers
Essie	Helen Carew
Belle Newell	Phyllis Povah
Rachel Thatcher Arlen	Zita Johann
Dan Hardeen	Warner Anderson
Christina Landers	Edith Atwater
Trina	Joan McSweeney
Howard Newell	Gordon Nelson

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
June 24, 1942

'Broken Journey' War Romance of a Restless Correspondent

"Broken Journey," drama by Andrew Rosenthal. Produced by Martin Burton at Henry Miller's Theatre, New York, June 23, 1942.

★ ★+

By BURNS MANTLE

WHEN they add up the account of "Broken Journey," a war romance that was presented at Henry Miller's Theatre last night, they will find that Martin Burton, the producer, has done his part rather handsomely.

At least he engaged Arthur Hopkins as his director, and permitted Mr. Hopkins to hire a competent company. And he engaged Raymond Sovey to surround the company with the pleasant interior of a somewhat stuffy old-fashioned house in the suburb of an Ohio city.

Mr. Burton's serious mistake was in placing too much confidence in Andrew Rosenthal's play. It is another of those futile war romances that drip authors' blood and leave a trail for critical and storehouse sharks to follow.

Correspondent's Romance

Mr. Rosenthal would tell of Dan Hardeen and Christina Landers, a lively and knowing pair of war correspondents, commentators, lecturers and authors, who find themselves in November, 1941, in Ohio, wondering at the incredible lethargy of the American people.

They have been traveling through and reporting in print and by air the state of war-torn Europe.

Christina is a widow with a precocious 10-year-old daughter. Dan is a bachelor who has not given too much thought to marriage.

In Ohio, however, Dan remembers Rachel Thatcher, who had once refused to follow him to Russia. Now, meeting Rachel again, he thinks to renew his suit and settle down. Which is rather a shock to Christina.

Then comes the bombing of Pearl Harbor and a correspondent's call to action. After that, nothing that any of Mr. Rosenthal's high contracting parties thought might happen does happen. Not, at least, as expected.

Good Cast

Edith Atwater plays the upstanding and wise Christina. Zita Johann is her sweetly feminine foil as Rachel. Both neatly true to character.

Warner Anderson is the rugged and restless Dan, and Tom Powers a contrasting, thoroughly domesticated home fellow eager to find himself a mate and settle down. This pair is also kept well in character.

Peopling the middle reaches are little Joan McSweeney, who did so well with "Solitaire" a year ago, as the 10-year-old, again poised and adorable; Phyllis Povah, Gordon Nelson and Helen Carew.

"Broken Journey" is a simple wartime romance, artificially contrived to meet a suspected call of the present, but with little to say worth saying.

NEW YORK SUN
June 24, 1942

'Broken Journey' Has Its Premiere at Henry Miller's Theater

QUITE possibly there is a moving and exciting play to be written about a noted radio reporter, fresh from war-torn lands of Europe, paying a visit to his old home town out in Ohio shortly before Pearl Harbor, but if so, unfortunately it isn't the one penned by Andrew Rosenthal and called "Broken Journey."

A valiant little group of well-known players proved that rather emphatically last evening when they struggled vainly for a little over two hours to bring Mr. Rosenthal's play to life on the stage of Henry Miller's Theater. For "Broken Journey" turns out to be "The Man Who Came to Dinner" become somber, static and sour, and even such talented direction as that of Arthur Hopkins can't make much out of it.

In Mr. Rosenthal's play, Dan Hardeen, broadcasting journalist extraordinaire, returns to lecture in his native city one November afternoon in 1941 and arrives with a fellow commentator of the air waves, a widow, one Christina Landers in tow. The latter has with her her young and precocious daughter. It seems that this happy trio has been traveling about Europe together for several years, always bobbing up where the news was bloodiest. Dan's boyhood sweetheart, Rachel, invites Dan and Mrs. Landers for dinner at the big house, where she lives with her erudite but lackadaisical brother. By the time the evening is well under way, Dan, Mrs. Landers, and the daughter have moved in for quite a stay. Three weeks later when the Japs strike their blow, the three are still house guests, though what has become of Dan's lecture tour in the meantime was never quite cleared up last night. Anyway, enough time has elapsed to allow Dan to figure out that maybe this globe trotting isn't the real thing after all, and that settling down in Ohio, marrying his first love, and helping run the local newspaper would be a lot more comfortable, at least. Also there has been time for Rachel's brother to fall in love with Mrs. Landers.

So Pearl Harbor stirs up quite a problem for Dan, and the others, too. Nobody can quite see Rachel standing up under fire, so when Mrs. Landers, true to her journalist's instinct, dashes off for the Far East, taking her child with her, Dan lingers behind. But on Christmas Eve, when Dan, safe by the yule tree in Ohio, hears Mrs. Landers broadcasting over the radio from Manila, he dashes away, too, and learns, we hope, just how even so brilliant a lady as Mrs. Landers got the kid way out there by plane in wartime.

Here and there, as the story unfolds, there are some effective scenes, particularly the one in the second act, where Tom Powers as Rachel's brother proposes to Mrs. Landers, played by Edith Atwater. That bit is both touching and real. In fact, Miss Atwater manages during much of the evening to lend an air of vitality to the proceedings by her acting. But we never could understand what she saw in Mr. Rosenthal's Dan, even when portrayed by so manly an actor as Warner Anderson. And as for Rachel, she was just helpless beyond anything that Zita Johann could do about her. Joan McSweeney is an appealing little girl as the daughter, but even so skillful an actress as Phyllis Povah couldn't make the trite and scatterbrained neighbor, Belle Newell, amusing.

In fact, the saddest part of the evening was seeing so much acting talent going to waste.

HERRICK BROWN.

"Broken Journey"

NEW YORK POST
June 24, 1942

"Broken Journey" Produced At Henry Miller's Theatre

By WILELLA WALDORF

ANDREW ROSENTHAL'S "Broken Journey," presented last night at Henry Miller's Theatre, is an exasperating play.

Mr. Rosenthal, who comes from Ohio, has been impressed with the bland, bumptious attitude of many Americans toward world events, both before and after Pearl Harbor, their refusal to face facts and to realize what is going on.

He has hit upon the idea of bringing Dan Hardeen, a noted war correspondent and radio commentator, back to his home town on a lecture tour, accompanied by his secretary and co-commentator, Mrs. Christina Landers, and her young daughter, Trina.

The three of them have roamed the world together for years, covering war after war, and when they land for a spell in the old Thatcher homestead in the Ohio town where Dan grew up, the thought of leaving the restless, exciting, but nerve-wracking life for a comfortable fire-side assails both Dan and Christina.

Dan is particularly tempted in that he has fallen in love again with the home-town girl he once proposed to years ago, and is offered, besides, the editorship and a half-interest in the local newspaper.

The Attack on Pearl Harbor

All this is happening in December, 1941, and just as events at the Thatchers are reaching the boiling point, news comes over the radio that the Japs have attacked Pearl Harbor.

Here is material for a provocative play. The exasperating truth, however, is that Mr. Rosenthal has been unable to develop it into anything more than a very uneven and amazingly synthetic drama.

Although his material is promising, and his characters recognizable, he has insisted upon manipulating his plot so clumsily that at times it becomes downright laughable. The second act closes, for instance, with preparations for the departure for the war zone the night of the Pearl Harbor attack not only of Dan and Christina, but of Trina and Dan's old girl as well.

The preposterous notion of a couple of ace correspondents taking youthful daughters and eager fiancees along to Hawaii and the Philippines by Clipper with Japanese bombs dropping all over the Pacific turns "Broken Journey" for the nonce into out-and-out farce.

Mr. Rosenthal possesses what almost amounts to a genius for rendering situations and characters unpleasantly phoney when they might easily have been not only convincing, but even affecting.

Good Actors in Trouble

Endeavoring, perhaps, to present many facets of their intriguing personalities, he succeeds more often than not in baffling not only the audience but the actors as well.

Zita Johann's odd behavior in the latter part of the play was little short of astonishing and Miss Johann must have been completely at a loss to decide just what sort of person she was supposed to be, while Edith Atwater, forced for purpose of plot to be merely rude in Act 1, obviously felt more at ease when permitted to become a little more civilized later on.

Warner Anderson, recently seen at the Studio Theatre in "War and Peace," made his Broadway debut as the correspondent, struggling manfully with the part, while Tom Powers, Phyllis Povah and Helen Carew, being more simple, less complicated, people, came off better than the rest. Little Joan McSweeney played Trina, the precocious child described before her entrance as a terror, though she seemed relatively harmless in the flesh.

It seemed to us that Arthur Hopkins, as director, failed rather completely to conceal or smooth over the inadequacies of the script. In the first act particularly, the actors were made to stand around stiffly, looking uncomfortable, and prattling away at a terrific rate, without paying much attention to what they were saying as long as the words tumbled out on schedule.

Things loosened up a bit later on, but although it may be heresy to say so, it is our impression that Mr. Hopkins' brand of stage direction has an unfortunate tendency to make actors seem awkward and ill at ease. When he has in hand a play written by an expert technician, it is not so obvious, but when, as last night, he is operating on a very uneven script, the Hopkins method makes some of the ineptitudes more glaring.

Mr. Rosenthal was the author of a play called "The Burning Deck," which we remember as one of the horrors of 1940. To say that he has improved greatly since then is praise so faint as to be all but invisible to the naked eye. Nevertheless, "Broken Journey" is good enough to be much, much better.

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THEATRE REVIEWS

"Broken Journey"

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
June 24, 1942

Modern Heroes

By RICHARD WATTS, JR.

THE lives and bad habits of that remarkable genus, the foreign correspondent, are studied with considerable awe in the new play by Andrew Rosenthal. This "Broken Journey" looks upon the brave boys and girls of the cables, the radio and the lecture platform as handsome amalgamations of hero, bohemian, wit, sage and patriot, which no doubt they are. Darting from war to war and plane to plane, calling the Messrs. Shirer and Reynolds by their first names and becoming mothers or fathers, as the case may be, in first-class railroad carriages, they are, it seems, such fascinating people that the playwright comes pretty close to swooning with ecstasy as he contemplates them. Indeed, he observes them with such rapture that his drama about them becomes a little dewy-eyed.

* * *

You will be glad to know that even in the midst of their perilous exploits these heroic men and women have an opportunity to clutch at a picturesque if precarious sort of domesticity. At least Mr. Rosenthal's heroine, a fearless and adventurous lady if ever there was one, is at bottom so motherly a person that she takes her seven-year-old daughter with her wherever she goes, from Madrid to Manila, and the lovely child is never so happy as when passing her Christmas in a shell hole or an air-raid shelter. As for his hero, who is equally bold and dashing, when he plans to set out for Pearl Harbor on the evening of that fateful Dec. 7 he thinks nothing of getting married at once and engaging an extra clipper passage for his bride. It is all very cozy.

* * *

Although these splendid people actually deign to mingle with ordinary men and women from time to time, it is Mr. Rosenthal's theory that they are, of course, much too good for them and that, after living with common mortals for a few weeks, they are certain to see the error of their ways and go off together, in their godlike fashion. It is, therefore, his plot scheme to show one foreign correspondent who is perhaps a sort of pale reflection of Dorothy Thompson, Clare Boothe, Sonia Tomara and a stock theatrical figure, and another war-time journalist, who no doubt suggests some of the traits of Vincent Sheean, John Whitaker and John Gunther, tarrying with the groundlings of an Ohio town for a while and then darting off restlessly to the scene of battle.

* * *

Mr. Rosenthal writes with earnestness and feeling, but I cannot avoid the impression that his people are bogus, their problems and emotions unreal and their actions tedious. That, however, is hardly the fault of Arthur Hopkins's direction or of the playing of a competent cast. Miss Edith Atwater and Warner Anderson are not quite like any foreign correspondents I have ever encountered, but their acting is direct and sensible. Young Miss Joan McSweeney, a beautiful child and a good actress, makes the precocious daughter less unpleasant than she might otherwise have been, while Miss Zita Johann and Tom Powers suffer with dignified intensity as the well-meaning but essentially unworthy groundlings, and Miss Phyllis Povah is the fluttery comic relief. "Broken Journey" strikes me as a dubious study in journalism.

NEW YORK NEWSPAPER "PM"
June 24, 1942

Youth Has Its Unhappy Fling

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

ONE would hardly need to be told that the author of *Broken Journey* is a very young man, for it is unmistakably a young man's play. Mr. Rosenthal is not unintelligent and perhaps not untalented, but he has made immemorial blunders which are also fatal ones. *Broken Journey* is too literary a play, too strained and forced and big with words, too full of situations that are not only much more hackneyed than the author realizes, but also much harder to handle. It constantly strikes false notes; it consistently proclaims its determination to be clever or sophisticated, or penetrating. It somehow never manages to be simple, and even in its better moments never manages to ring true. Its very curtain lines—shrill and over-emphatic—are brutally telltale.

Mr. Rosenthal has written of a famous war correspondent's return, on the eve of Pearl Harbor, to his smug and stodgy home town in Ohio. He brings with him a woman correspondent whom he has lived with for years, and then falls in love again with the girl he left behind him. After Pearl Harbor he remains with her, while the woman correspondent hops off on an assignment meant for them both. But when, on Christmas Eve, she broadcasts eloquently from Manila, he realizes where he belongs.

The precise circumstances are topical enough, but the contrast between two ways of life and two kinds of women is distressingly familiar, and Mr. Rosenthal only accentuates its triteness by his desperate attempt to conceal it. For two acts, indeed, he is merely dull; dull and incurably talky; and dullest of all when he tries to be sprightly. In the third act he is less dull, he is even at times dramatic; but the effects continue to be false, and sometimes even foolish.

With one or two exceptions, the cast could not outwit the play. Warner Anderson was fairly natural as the hero, and Phyllis Povah wrung some humor out of the part of a hen-brained gossip. But neither Edith Atwater nor Zita Johann could be convincing as the women, and their strained performances were the final proof of a sadly struggling play.

NEW YORK TIMES
June 24, 1942

THE PLAY IN REVIEW

"Broken Journey"

PROBABLY Andrew Rosenthal has been listening overmuch to the radio. Likely he has wondered a bit about the personality and character of the owners of those far-off voices, speaking breathless from the battlefield, and he has gone on to imagine them set down temporarily in a small Ohio town of pre-Pearl Harbor. Being a practicing playwright, Mr. Rosenthal has translated the wonder into action, and last evening Martin Burton set forth the result, called "Broken Journey," at Henry Miller's Theatre. Despite the presence in the cast of numerous figures of the better brackets of the theatrical Who's Who, the evening appeared to leave the theatre roughly where it was at supper time, before the curtain went up.

Mr. Rosenthal's central figures are Dan Hardeen and Christina Landers of NBC's ambient staff, who are lecturing through the United States between war engagements. Mrs. Landers has her young daughter with her, and the three visit the town where Dan grew up with his dreams and the home where he paid court to his boyhood sweetheart. Get them in small towns and radio people are like newspaper people—in plays—so Dan decides he wants a home and no longer will wander; Christina, being of sterner stuff, takes her daughter and goes on to Manila without him. When harassed, Dan has a trick of yanking his tie; the final action of "Broken Journey" shows him doing same, presumably as a preliminary to going to Manila, too.

The radio correspondents unquestionably deserve a play and they just as unquestionably did nothing to deserve this one. Occasionally a good line crops up like a kind deed and there are a few moments that suggest Mr. Rosenthal may soon get down to even terms with the muse, but there also is much that is purple and many situations that follow the signposts stubbornly to the bitter end.

Warner Anderson plays the role of the unhappy Dan and for a first Broadway appearance makes the character as believable as other circumstances permit. Edith Atwater is good as Christina and Joan McSweeney would be a worthy addition to any family with children. Tom Powers is in there, struggling with a not carefully written character, and Zita Johann is there at least part of the time, just making grimaces at hers. Arthur Hopkins directed.

L. N.

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
June 24, 1942

A Broken Journey to War

By GARLAND HICKS

IT WAS the same old triangle all over again last night at Henry Miller's Theater. This time, in Martin Burton's production of Broken Journey, it is a returned foreign correspondent who must decide between the girl he once left behind and the one who has been traipsing around the world with him in a welter of bombs, broadcasts and autobiographies.

From this unpromising material Andrew Rosenthal has fashioned a play which slowly —oh, so slowly—talks itself to death.

It was a cozy little trio that descended on the unsuspecting Ohio suburb. There was Dan Hardeen, glorying in the plaudits of the country club crowd that once had snubbed him. A flop on the lecture platform with his tales of Ethiopia and Spain, he spent his leisure time nervously loosening his bow tie, a symbol, we are told, of mounting determination.

Then there was Christina Landers, his fellow-traveler-reporter, who would reknot the tie—a trick poor Hardeen never could quite master. Bringing up the rear was Mrs. Landers' young daughter Trina. Trina couldn't bear to settle down, merely wanted to curl up in an air liner with a good history book and a third interest in the toothbrush.

But Satan called Hardeen to the top of the First National Bank and showed him a snug fireside with the little woman worrying so charmingly over her budget. And the prospect of a Christmas at home. And an obliging home town publisher who, after only two brandies, offered him a half share in the newspaper.

It was too much; Christina was out and Rachel was in.

Came Pearl Harbor and frantic telephone calls and air reservations. This time Rachel was to join the caravan and make it a foursome. But Christina talked Rachel out of it, and Rachel talked Hardeen out of it, so in the end it was Christina and her daughter and typewriter who returned to the wars.

Came Christmas Eve and a familiar voice on the Manila broadcast interrupted the Dickens reading—and the Hardeen necktie suffered again.

Edith Atwater, whose current Ohio sojourn is much less felicitous than was her similar one in The Man Who Came to Dinner, tries bravely to breathe reality into the role of the female correspondent. But only in the last scenes is she even partly successful. Her antagonist, Zita Johann, plays the homebody with measured coyness.

Little Joan McSweeney does well with the undeveloped part of Trina, and Warner Anderson, as Hardeen, deserves a better chance. Phyllis Povah was an effective neighborhood gossip, the play's single convincing character.

An exceedingly dull first act started Broken Journey off on the wrong foot. And try as it might, it never quite got back into step.

"Laugh, Town, Laugh!"

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN
June 23, 1942

Ed Wynn Is Back At Alvin Theatre

The Perfect Fool Produces and Emcees New Variety Show, 'Laugh, Town, Laugh'

By JOHN ANDERSON

IF ED WYNN sprained his eyebrows and had to carry his expression around in a sling it would not only be a public calamity but it might seriously interfere with his work on the stage.

But since Mr. Wynn mangled four fingers on his right hand during rehearsals for "Laugh, Town, Laugh" he seems admirably intact, and his new vaudeville enterprise which opened at the Alvin last night is, even with a fractured Wynn, fine fun and foolishness. Mr. Wynn's hand is plainly not the thing that he has used all these years to rock the nation with merriment, but if he ever nicks his funnybone God help us.

No one, of course, even approaches the Perfect Fool in the perfection of his folly. He is the master, and this loose collection of sketches, songs and tricks, goes back, as he explains in his giggling introduction, to his old days at the Palace, where he was a headliner among headliners. This is his first vaudeville venture in 29 years.

Costumes, Et Al

Here he is, with his weird assortment of costumes, his affable idiocy, his casual manner, and his look of steady surprise, a master of ceremonies, introducing such tried and true numbers as Smith and Dale, in their celebrated old sketch "Dr. Kronkheit," Carmen Amaya, Jane Froman, some Russian singers, and a wonderful Portuguese ventriloquist, Senor Wences.

It is a wide assortment, some very good, some passable, and all aided by the benign goofiness of the head man. When Mr. Wynn permitted me to see it on its tryout it needed cutting and pacing, and more of Mr. Wynn—all details which the great clown could probably fix with his left hand—his right being in the condition it is.

Among other things Mr. Wynn has managed to be almost as international as an Allied Nations Council. The eight Volga singers roll out some wonderful vocal effects, including, of course, the inevitable song of the boatman, the Five Herzogs take care of the Australian representation, and Carmen Amaya performs with sultry violence some incandescent Spanish dancing.

The Hermanos Williams Trio from Argentina, performs some graceful acrobatics, with deceptive ease, and Miss Froman, from the U. S. A., sings. It would help if Miss Froman enunciated more clearly and would not let the ends of the lines fade out. Great Britain and Canada are represented by a badminton match, of all things, which turns out to be a brisk, amusing, and entertaining game between Ken Davidson and Hugh Forgie. As a result of announcing the progress of a swift and at times almost invisible game Jerry Brannon talks faster than anybody outside a Gilbert and Sullivan patter song.

Old Reliables

Senor Wences has assembled an act that is truly remarkable. His performance with a singing puppet, whose head is the Senor's hand, is deft and amusing, and his conversation with a life-like head, tucked away in a wooden box on the table, is funny, with just a touch of the macabre. The vocal tricks are brilliant, and they are supplemented by a little dress suit juggling.

Smith and Dale belong among the old reliables and their sketch is one of the vaudeville landmarks. During its performance in Bridgeport the sketch achieved something which I have often heard and written about, but never before witnessed, to wit: It actually threw a susceptible playgoer into the aisle with laughter. I now confidently expect to see a playgoer really laugh his head off—to wind up, I daresay, as a stooge for Senor Wences.

Through all these sketches, sometimes in them and sometimes merely as a happy observer, is the great Wynn, sublimely foolish and hilariously funny.

He never scorns the much-abused pun, and perpetrates some wonders. It may please you to know that he says he tried to hoard gasoline and hired a boy to bury twenty 5-gallon cans in the back yard. When he had finished the boy asked him what he wanted to do with the cans. Mr. Wynn also is confused about the changes in time. In fact he has a cuckoo clock whose cuckoo comes out every hour on the hour, shrugs its shoulders and goes back in.

As long as Mr. Wynn is the chief cuckoo of the theatre I don't care what time it is.

NEW YORK NEWSPAPER "PM"
June 23, 1942

The Perfect Fool Tops a Good Show

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

SINCE vaudeville is at present one of the reigning belles of the theater, Ed Wynn has set about paying it court in *Laugh, Town, Laugh*. He has collected a dozen acts, some of them remarkably good, and twined himself 'round them as master of ceremonies. At a $2.20 top this is indeed what the trade calls a buy; in fact, anybody who didn't feel he was getting his money's worth will probably be the sort of guy who goes looking for a suit with three pairs of pants.

Wynn has certainly been funnier than he was on Monday night; but as the funniest man in the business, he can drop a peg or two and still be funny enough. The deficiency, if it lay anywhere, lay in the gags, some of which were more up vaudeville's alley than Wynn's. But the face with its idiot's smile has not changed, nor has the whinny, nor the shoes, and there are some new and interesting experiments in costuming (my own favorite was a creation that had a touch of the Crusades about it).

There are also a few new inventions, including a collection box that makes vocal comments on the various-sized contributions. Mr. Wynn even contrived to turn his bandaged sore hand, which delayed the opening of the show, into a species of invention. And the rowboat, niblic rifle and bicycle-piano that brightened the career of *Boys and Girls Together* have not been allowed to grow rusty. The Perfect Fool certainly can't be accused of having held anything back.

Wynn—except for Smith & Dale, those rich reminders of vaudeville in its prime—has provided all the laughs of the show, and let the other performers provide the song, the color and the thrills. The four Herzog ladies, and particularly one of them, are real wizards of the trapeze. A Portuguese named Senor Wences is equally a wizard at ventriloquism, prestidigitation and juggling, all three of which things he generally does at the same time. Though, for me, Carmen Amaya lacks the wit and style of an Argentinita, in a flashier way she does some exciting flamenco dances.

Jane Froman is a pretty girl whose singing exudes confidence, if that can be considered an asset and who, right in the midst of a popular tune, can draw herself up in attitudes that rather suggest Mrs. Siddons at her grandest. There are also some Russian singers who, bathed in an American-beauty spotlight, do a pretty terrible job of the *Volga Boatman*.

But these are the minor mishaps of a lively evening. Near the close Smith & Dale come on in their famous *Dr. Kronkheit* skit, wherein the patient makes his classic complaint:

"Every time I eat a heavy meal I don't feel so hungry."

This, one of the glories of the Palace era, still does handsomely at the Alvin. In fact, *Laugh, Town, Laugh* does pretty well as a whole.

NEW YORK SUN
June 23, 1942

Ed Wynn Opens His Vaudeville Show, 'Laugh, Town, Laugh'

VAUDEVILLE having hit the comeback trail this spring, Ed Wynn did his bit last evening to escort it personally along the return road by presenting his own show at the Alvin Theater. "Laugh, Town, Laugh" he calls it, and those citizens of the town able to cram their way into the Alvin last night accepted his invitation gleefully, and laugh they did, long, often and heartily.

In the decidedly de luxe bill which he presents, Mr. Wynn allots himself only two regular numbers, but lest the Wynn fans become worried, we beg to report at once that he is in there pitching from beginning to end, emerging at the curtain's rise from a mammoth hot dog sandwich to announce with a giggle that he has just stepped out of a new roll, and nervously and comically assisting Hector and his Pals in the traditional animal act with which the program is brought to a close. As a matter of fact in sticking so closely to the old vaudeville pattern, Mr. Wynn brought his curtain do... last night rather flatly, especially in the light of the hilarity with which the proceedings began. That was a small matter, however, and to mention it comes close to quibbling, considering all the good things that had gone before. For "Laugh, Town, Laugh" has plenty of variety and color, and plenty of talent too.

Among Mr. Wynn's headliners is Jane Froman, who sings most engagingly a gamut of the day's hit tunes from the dreamy strains of "Sleepy Lagoon" to the foot tapping measures of "Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree." Then there is heel clicking Carmen Amaya and her troupe of gypsy musicians and dancers; the Hermanos Williams Trio, who dance and sing gayly to music from the Argentine; Senor Wences from Portugal with a highly original ventriloquism act; and near the close, Joe Smith and Charles Dale to warm the hearts of the old patrons of the Palace with their "Dr. Kronkheit" number. That there are plenty of laughs still left in this famous old skit was ably demonstrated last evening by the roars of mirth which greeted it. This particular onlooker was left so weak from laughter that he was almost too exhausted to enjoy the bevy of dogs which came on next.

Mr. Wynn has one distinct novelty in his program, too, a demonstration of badminton by Ken Davidson from Great Britain and Hugh Forgie from Australia. The game, as played last evening by these two experts, proved both exciting and diverting, and was easily one of the high points of the bill.

Mr. Wynn himself pops in and out in his outlandish hats and costumes all evening most delightfully. He is on hand to gasp in amazement when his invitation for a recruit from the audience for the trapeze act brings forth a gawky young lady to evoke first guffaws, and then cheers, by her performance with the Herzog aerialist troupe. A moment later, like some fond parent, he is leading in the melodious Volga Singers, explaining patiently that the bass is really a remarkable fellow who "has to squeeze a bullfrog to get the pitch," and then drawing up a chair to beam on them with childish delight at their Russian numbers. From time to time he breaks in to give comical little lectures on what vaudeville is really like, and he ties the whole program together most skillfully by his antics.

Due to the injury to his right hand suffered in rehearsals, the comedian has temporarily shelved his scheduled act with Red Donahue and the donkey Uno. In its place Wynn revived last evening his hilarious demonstrations of his skill with various and sundry weapons, and to us, at least, it seemed funnier than it ever had.

In fact, we haven't run across any better cure for the blues in some time than Mr. Wynn's new show. If most bills had been half as good as that concocted by the self-styled Perfect Fool, vaudeville would never have died out in the first place.

HERRICK BROWN

"Laugh, Town, Laugh!"

NEW YORK POST
June 23, 1942

Ed Wynn's "Laugh, Town, Laugh!" Brings Vaudeville to the Alvin

By WILELLA WALDORF

IN HIS more recent musical shows, Ed Wynn has preferred to appear chiefly as a master of ceremonies, introducing various specialty acts and doing only one or two numbers of his own. He was therefore all ready to fall in with the present vogue for "bringing back vaudeville." His new show, "Laugh, Town, Laugh!" which arrived last night at the Alvin Theatre, is a regulation Ed Wynn revue produced on a less elaborate scale than usual and without a chorus. It costs only half as much as the big Wynn shows did, and for the price it is a merry summer entertainment.

In an effort to inject plenty of variety into his variety show, Mr. Wynn has enlisted everything from a ventriloquist to a badminton game played on the stage by a couple of champions. It is Wynn himself, however, who keeps things spinning with an inexhaustible supply of new "inventions" and the usual rare collection of silly stories and puns.

He makes his entrance from a large artificial hot dog, pausing to remark that he is stepping out of his roll in "Laugh, Town, Laugh!" Later on he resurrects that act involving a hunter in a boat who shoots crackers off a tree in a remarkable display of marksmanship. It was dug up on short notice, apparently, to replace Red Donahue and his mule, who are not in the show, the mule having inadvertently fractured three bones in the comedian's hand during a rehearsal.

The hand is still not yet fully healed and several stunts have been shifted around a bit as a consequence. The accident, however, has had no appreciable effect on the Wynn brand of humor, which is still very diverting. The Wynn supply of funny coats and hats also is as amazing as ever.

Carmen Amaya and Family

Chief among the acts Mr. Wynn introduces is Carmen Amaya, the gypsy who has caused something of a furore in dance circles, appearing with four members of her family plus Sabicas, a guitarist. It is our impression that an entire evening with the Amayas might develop a certain monotony, but there is just enough of them in "Laugh, Town, Laugh" and they are good.

Mr. Wynn is a canny showman. Few of his featured performers are permitted to keep going until they have overstayed their welcome. The acts themselves vary a good deal in their appeal, but there is evidence of a guiding hand in putting the show together, which is more than we can say of one or two other "vaudeville" shows of recent vintage.

As a novelty, the badminton match between Ken Davidson and Hugh Forgie is exciting stuff. Senor Wences is a clever ventriloquist. Joe Smith and Charles Dale are still funny in that venerable low-comedy sketch entitled "Dr. Kronkheit." The Hermanos Williams Trio from Argentina are gracefully athletic, while the Volga Singers from Russia are eight men who sing very effectively, with Wynn all dressed up in a Cossack uniform occasionally tossing in a note or two in his own particular brand of Russian.

The flying Herzogs swing on trapezes out over the audience, which is thrilling as long as nobody drops off, and Jane Froman warbles, being ecstatically billed as "America's Leading Lady of Song." This is an exaggeration.

Hector and Pals involves some cute dogs, but the Bricklayers, late of "Top-Notchers," now in "Priorities of 1942," have taken the edge off other dog acts for us of late.

What makes "Laugh, Town, Laugh!" worth a visit, though, is Ed Wynn himself, up to some old tricks and a few new ones. He is still a very funny fellow.

'LAUGH, TOWN, LAUGH'

A variety show presented by Ed Wynn at the Alvin Theater on June 22, 1942, with a cast which includes Mr. Wynn, Jane Froman, Carmen Amaya, Joe Smith and Charles Dale, Senor Wences, the Hermanos Williams Trio, Emil Coleman, Ken Davidson and Hugh Forgie and others.

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
June 23, 1942

Wynn Brings Back More and Better Vaudeville to the Alvin

"Laugh, Town, Laugh," an evening of vaudeville assembled and presented by Ed Wynn at the Alvin Theatre, New York, June 22, 1942.

★ ★ ★

By BURNS MANTLE

IT SEEMS to me that Ed Wynn, despite a series of handicaps that might have discouraged anybody but the Perfect Fool, has brought the best of the revived vaudeville shows to life in "Laugh, Town, Laugh" which began a Summer, or air-conditioned, engagement at the Alvin last night.

Here, at least, is a suggestion of novelty. Here are faces and acts that are, to me, new and a little exciting. Most of the stars have been around in one sort of show or another. Some of them for years.

But I doubt if you have seen an exciting seven-point game of badminton played on the stage before, as Ken Davidson and Hugh Forgie play it.

Or as satisfying an act of acrobatics and song as that which the Hermanos Williams Trio stages. Remember the Rath Brothers? These are the Rath Brothers plus a pretty singing lady and a series of thrilling stunts in waltz time all from South America.

Here, too, is fiery Carmen Amaya and her small troupe of guitarists and flamenco stampers. The little Amaya was, as usual, a tremendous hit with the Latins who follow her in and out of theatres and night clubs.

Tops in His Line

Senor Wences must be easily the greatest of modern ventriloquists. He has, they tell me, been tossing his voice about night clubs and such, but I don't get around as much as those old bed-haters, the Messrs. Walker and Sullivan, do. Therefore I've seen him but once before.

Then at the end of the evening come Joe Smith and Charles Dale, playing that tough old, rough old "Dr. Kronkheit" number that had the Dale-Smith crowd preparing to roll in whatever aisles might be handy if they (the comics) kept at their business much longer.

Also, the singer can sing, which is always a help. She is Jane Froman. True, Jane is acquiring a collection of affectations that she had better be watching. With her beauty and her quality of voice she can very well do without quite so much fancy smiling and stepping in her salutes and acknowledgments.

I happened to like the filler acts, too. The Volga Singers. Eight husky Russians who doubtless have their own excuses for not fighting on the Donets instead of singing about the Volga. Nice voices, and amusing foils for Master Wynn.

On the Flying Trapeze

The Herzogs are a quintette of young women who do exciting things on the flying trapeze. And Hector's dogs are those intelligent canines who long, long ago helped the Wynn person with one of his best laugh-getting interludes in, I think, something called "Simple Simon."

It is an international show, this "Laugh, Town, Laugh." Entrants from five or six countries. An it has that unmistakable class and cleanliness that lift it above a common average.

Edward, with one hand in a rubber guard (he broke it rehearsing with Uno, the mule, who evidently was given his notice last week), was as gay as usual but more worried. He is, to those of us who count him the most satisfying of the famous fools, always a pleasant relief from the comic run. His quips, impromptu or studied, are as dependably amusing as any and far more intelligent than most.

With the front page news what it is "Laugh, Town, Laugh," is mighty welcome.

NEW YORK TIMES
June 23, 1942

Ed Wynn and Friends Put on Evening of Mirth and Madness at the Alvin

THE PERFECT FOOL dropped in on the town last evening, bringing with him what to all intents and purposes was practically the perfect vaudeville show. For "Laugh, Town, Laugh!", which rang through the halls of the Alvin, has a little of everything—as properly should the most worthy of variety. Daring young ladies swing by their heels from the flying trapeze; lovely young ladies, perched on pianos, sing of the sleepy lagoon. Ventriloquists carry on conversation from four or five parts of the stage, and the clatter of heels note that the best of the flamenco folk are up there picking them up and setting them down fast and in order. And also there is the Perfect Fool, Ed Wynn to the more formal customers.

Mr. Wynn is in high form. With his countless hats, the wondrous costume and the vague, uncertain smile, he wanders on and off the stage, showering puns and inventions. During the rehearsal days for "Laugh, Town, Laugh!" he came in contact with a mule, but a broken hand is no misfortune to the Perfect Fool setting out to amuse his neighbors. He makes sad little jokes about it, and a small neat cast becomes one of the better props in the Wynn bag of tricks. During the intermission he ambles through the audience, last evening stopping the show to ask the orchestra to give "The Sidewalks of New York" in honor of former Governor Smith.

* * *

In his casual role of master of ceremonies, Mr. Wynn finds no lack of material to introduce. There is Jane Froman, the voice of the air and the juke, who travels through the sleepy lagoon and into "Tea for Two" and the rest of the catalogue of modern Tin Pan Alley, alternately throaty and soft. Then too, there is Carmen Amaya, the frenzy of flamenco, who can sell out Carnegie Hall and have them howling there, most untraditionally. Miss Amaya is accompanied by a quorum of her relatives—sisters, cousins, probably aunts, and her father, and Sabicas the guitarist—and dances with them or around them, with more speed than the Alvin probably has ever seen.

Making an international incident of the evening, Mr. Wynn points out the origin of his acts. From Australia come the Herzogs, being five young ladies who do incredible things on trapezes swinging up somewhere near the roof; and from Russia are the Volga Singers. (The bass in this outfit, according to the master of ceremonies, gets his note by squeezing a bull frog.) The Hermanos Williams Trio, ex-Argentina, are a combination vocal, dance and acrobat act, and good, too, and Portugal's Senor Wences is one of the best ventriloquists in that manner of speaking. He can smoke, sneeze and box the compass verbally all at once.

As to the rest, Ken Davidson and Hugh Forgie are up there playing badminton as the champions do it—only Ed Wynn could think of putting that one on, and quite right he was, too—and along toward the end are the quite and justly celebrated Smith & Dale, whose renowned saga of "Dr. Kronkheit" is as famous as vaudeville, itself, used to be, and no doubt will be again if this sort of thing keeps up. Hector and Pals, an informal dog act, conclude, and listed on the program but not appearing last night was Red Donahue and Uno. Uno is the mule with which Mr. Wynn earlier was in contact, and according to the management he will be back in the cast as soon as the Wynn hand is better. The Perfect Fool bears no resentment; he simply can't manage Uno just yet.

L. N.

"Laugh, Town, Laugh!"

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
June 23, 1942

Dr. Kronkheit and Friends

By RICHARD WATTS, JR.

IT IS always such a pleasure to have Ed Wynn back with us that it seems captious to look too critically at the gift show that accompanies him. When in addition the same vaudeville bill includes the incomparable team of Smith and Dale, there is reason for gratitude rather than surliness. Therefore, let it be said that "Laugh, Town, Laugh," the new variety entertainment which offers these three wonderful comics, has some good acts, several passages of rare hilarity and an amiable air of informality about it. After that, it may be enough to whisper to you darkly that the current Wynn show, despite the fact that most of its numbers are quite passable, hardly can be classed as an outstanding example of its particular school of carnival.

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Of course, Mr. Wynn is a rare delight, whether he is showing us what the well dressed Perfect Fool will wear, introducing the other acts, analyzing the qualities of a vaudeville show, interfering with the other numbers or reviving the shooting act he offered in his last revue. There is no doubt, though, that the injured hand bothers him, and it does seem a shame that his unhappy run-in with the trained donkey named Uno resulted in the hasty departure from "Laugh, Town, Laugh" of an animal that caused me considerable delight a decade or so ago. As for Smith and Dale, that old act of theirs about Dr. Kronkheit and his hapless patient is one of the classics of vaudeville, and it is just as hilarious now as ever.

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In a changing world, it is comforting to note that the most famous and edifying of the Smith and Dale items of dialogue retains its magnificence. When the good physician announces that he is Dr. Kronkheit and the skeptical patient replies that he is dubious, thereby, of course, causing the doctor to say: "Glad to meet you, Mr. Dubious"—well, you cannot persuade me that this is not one of the greatest things in all of comic history. No doubt I should be telling you of other things in Mr. Wynn's personally sponsored vaudeville show but somehow it seems more important to all of us to linger on the superb qualities of the old-line comics and to remind any one foolish enough to have forgotten that in a sad universe such men are among the immortals.

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The most interesting among the newer performers is the Spanish girl named Carmen Amaya, who brings a grim ferocity and a bitter scorn for all about her that adds an interesting touch to her violent and primitive dancing. Mr. Wynn rather goes in for Latins. In addition to Miss Amaya, there is a Portuguese ventriloquist billed as Senor Wences, who actually succeeds in bringing a bit of originality to his Bergen-dominated profession, and a likeable Argentine team, the Hermanos Williams Trio, which combines singing and dancing with a good balancing act. From various parts of the British Empire come some women trapeze performers and a pair of badminton players, while Miss Jane Froman, from America, has her admirers as a singer of apparently popular songs. Somehow, though, I prefer the old-line comics.

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
June 23, 1942

Laugh, Town, Laugh, With Ed Wynn

Crowd at Alvin Does, at Least, at Varied and Amusing Variety

WITH Ed Wynn on hand in outlandish costumes to introduce each act, some of Laugh, Town, Laugh, the new vaudeville show at the Alvin, is exceptional; all is good. Like all good variety shows, it has a little bit of everything, so that practically everyone will find something to his liking.

Weaving together the entire performance was the ebullient Ed Wynn, handicapped, it is true, by the injury to his hand, but still manipulating his useless inventions, fingering his perambulating piano and keeping the proceedings moving along.

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Uno, the Mule, Omitted from Cast

He revived his cracker-tree-shooting episode from his last show to take the place of Red Donahue and Uno. It was Uno, the mule, that was responsible for the comedian's wounds—wounds that made the Wynn marksmanship even more preposterous but added a few more amusing lines to the Wynn patter.

Teaming with Emil Coleman, Wynn occupied the stage during the intermission last night to exchange banter and personal greetings with his milling audience. A spotlight and a few fancy steps went to Alfred E. Smith.

Joe Smith and Charlie Dale drew a lion's share of plaudits later in the evening with their oldtime vaudeville skit of Dr. Kronkheit, little changed after all these years.

If you like aerialists, the Herzogs from Australia will give you plenty of thrills as they soar through the air with the greatest of ease. If it's a ventriloquist you fancy, Senor Wences from Portugal is just the person to make you realize that Edgar Bergen hasn't a monopoly in this particular field. Then, from the U. S. A., there is Jane Froman, billed as America's leading lady of song, though to this spectator the title wasn't altogether realized last night. Russia contributes the Volga singers with their subterranean basso. And representing Spain is the unbelievable Carmen Amaya.

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Informality Reigns

In a sense the second half of the bill is better than the first, even though most of the outstanding acts occur in the early part of the program. This portion is more informal, too. In addition to Smith and Dale, to keep one in stitches with their violent dialectic assaults upon the funny bone, this section has the Hermanos Williams Trio, acrobats extraordinary, and Ken Davidson and Hugh Forgie, who perform marvels at badminton. Hector and Pals close the bill by keeping the Alvin stage covered with a swirling mass of dogs.

Laugh, Town, Laugh, lacks the flash to light it into a blazing show, but it is still a first-rate entertainment.

"The Cat Screams"

NEW YORK NEWSPAPER "PM"
June 17, 1942

It's Murder, All Right

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

THE kitchen sink (with all the supper dishes in it) is the nearest beginning of what has been thrown, with a hand as lavish as it is unskilled, into Mr. Beyea's murder mystery. The cat screams, and so do most of the characters. The humming bird dies, and so does nearly everybody who lives or is visiting in La Jorta, Mexico. The scimitar glitters and the hypodermic needle gleams. The Indian woman catches the Asiatic cholera. There are burnt letters and stolen blotters; poisoned whisky bottles and chloroform sponges; odd revolvers and masked assassins; locked doors and silent sentries. And, not to neglect culture in the midst of so much villainy and violence, there are renditions of macabre music and recitations of morbid poetry.

It is indeed an embarrassment of riches that *The Cat Screams* provides, or possibly just an embarrassment. The audience frequently laughed where it wasn't supposed to, and shivered not at all. For in spite of everything he put into his play, Mr. Beyea somehow left out such pertinent items as horror, credibility and suspense. The whole thing is merely silly and inept, with splotches of madly hifalutin and wildly irrelevant dialogue. One hangs on to the end only because one is vaguely held by the bewildering, insane profusion of it all, never knowing what will come next.

Such professional performers as Herbert Yost, Doris Nolan, Lloyd Gough, Mildred Dunnock, Lea Penman, and Martin Wolfson are involved in all these sinister and congested goings-on. Several of them, in fact, are murdered—which is pretty hard lines considering everything else they have to go through.

NEW YORK TIMES
June 17, 1942

Much Murder in Mex.

THE crime club took over the Martin Beck last evening to watch Basil Beyea stir up a most astounding witches' brew called "The Cat Screams." There were five scenes, with a murder per scene being par for the course, and at the end of it all the crime club went trailing down Eighth Avenue, gleefully quoting fragments of dialogue and meowing to one another like contented cats. "I'm glad it's over; it's been a strain," said one of the characters at the end of the fourth murder, and that seemed to sum up the whole case most competently. As Mr. Steinbeck was observing in the same theatre just before, the moon was down.

Mr. Beyea's whimsey is set in La Jorta, Mexico, in a pension obviously under the control of the furies. Item, one old man and his young wife. Item, the former lover of the wife, a writer, of course, who is anxious to resume the relationship. Item, a middle-aged spinster with a passion for reading Rupert Brooke. Item, a college professor and his son, also a professor, who are interested in the human race, from skull formations down. Item, the proprietor of the pension and her daughter. Item, the family cat. The carnage starts while the house is under medical quarantine, and one by one five characters go into a state of demise, a sequence broken only after all survivors have been blamed and during a third act that sounds like a parody.

Martha Hodge, who is making her debut as a producer, acquired some good people for the cast: Doris Nolan, for the role of the young wife; Herbert Yost as the professor; Mildred Dunnock as the spinster; Lloyd Gough, the writer who is standardly cynical; Martin Wolfson as the local doctor. Arthur Pierson has directed with due attention to such melodramatic detail as getting the lights dim enough, and John Root has designed a setting with sufficient doors for five corpses to hide behind. But Mr. Beyea, who based his play on Todd Downing's book of the same name, must have been joking just a bit somewhere. L. N.

"The Cat Screams"

NEW YORK SUN
June 17, 1942

'The Cat Screams,' A Furious Melodrama, Opens at the Martin Beck

By RICHARD LOCKRIDGE

TWO characters are poisoned and one is pushed off a high place in "The Cat Screams," which opened at the Martin Beck last evening. Two more are attacked by a miscreant wearing an Aztec cat mask, one is shot and another develops a rather odd case of creeping cholera and pursues a young anthropologist with an ancient sacrificial knife. Basil Beyea, who assembled all these horrors, is an improvident author and does not believe in saving a corpse for a rainy day.

Mr. Beyea is not, to be sure, solely responsible for this carnage. He took what he found in a novel by Todd Downing, and it is evident he found a lot. Mr. Downing is a mystery novelist with a taste for the bizarre and a willingness to lay it on thick. He prefers Mexico for local color and its horrendous cat masks; he likes a touch of narcodic frenzy and here and there a suggestion of sex-mania. He collects acutely peculiar people, and Mr. Beyea has assembled Mr. Downing's characters on the stage with relish. Most of them are mad in one fashion or another, and most of them get killed in the most elaborate manner possible.

It takes a long, somewhat aggressively literate, first act to introduce these doomed oddities. There is a novelist with an elegant taste for the sadistic; an old maid who likes to hold a candle on a darkened stairway and prophesy; a young woman who has married a man too old for her and is not happy about it, preferring the detached love of the author; a pretty Mexican girl who speaks broken English and a doctor who lets his patient crawl periodically to a convenient door and scream. There is also a rather attractive cat, upon which several of the characters would like, unfairly, to blame the goings on.

The corpses do not begin to fall until rather late in the proceedings, but after that they shower. Most of them leave baffling notes and one of them has a poisoned hummingbird in his pocket. The spinster plays madly upon a piano, the lights are turned rapidly up and down and the cat—or a not very reasonable facsimile of the same—threatens to scratch the hero's eyes out. By the end, an one of the characters beautifully remarks, "It's been a strain."

The strain was too much for the audience, which finally greeted each new death with a scream of delighted laughter. This proves that even a mystery writer has to know when to stop, that two murders are usually enough and that you have to persuade your audience to believe at least a little of what you tell it. Nobody, I fear, will believe much of "The Cat Screams," which begins by being laborious and ends by being preposterous.

The actors try hard and, in some instances, do rather well. You may approve Doris Nolan, sympathize with Cecilia Callejo, Gordon Oliver and Martin Wolfson and wish that all of them had held out for a play which made, here and there anyway, just a little sense.

'THE CAT SCREAMS'

A play in three acts by Basil Beyea; based on a novel of the same title by Todd Downing; staged by Arthur Pierson; setting by John Root; presented at the Martin Beck Theater on June 16, 1942, by Martha Hodge. The cast:

Consuelo	Cecilia Callejo
Professor Parkham	Herbert Yost
Gwen Reid	Doris Nolan
Miss Giddon	Mildred Dunnock
Steven Tybalt	Lloyd Gough
Madame	Lea Penman
Cari Parkham	Gordon Oliver
Micaela	Osceola Archer
Oliver Reid	Harry Sheppard
Doctor Otero	Martin Wolfson
Soldier	George Spaulding
Soldier	Michael St. Angel

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN
June 17, 1942

Terroristic Drama Based on Odd Situations in Mexican Household

By JOHN ANDERSON

ALTHOUGH most of the characters in "The Cat Screams" at Martin Beck's last night showed a commendable but tardy impulse to bump themselves off, they chatted a good deal before doing so, and I found the chief interest of the evening in a mild wonder over which group would survive the dialogue—the cast or the audience.

At the end of the second act the cast was two down with five to go, an hysterical woman was stealing blotting papers, and a peculiar young man had apparently just turned himself into a cat, or something. I chose that as the appropriate moment to turn myself into a street, an eastbound street, going away from there. It is no place even for an aelurophobe.

For Basil Beyea has written and Martha Hodge has produced one of these attempts at the macabre and terror-ridden drama which, when they are good, are very, very good, and when they are bad seem to be just a revival of something like "The Cat Screams."

When such a play succeeds in scaring the daylights out of its audience and making pleasurable chills chase up and down the playgoing spines, it doesn't make much difference whether it makes sense or not.

Effect Lost

So I am not objecting to the supernatural and psychotic whim-whams of Mr. Beyea's work, but only to the fact that it is not scary, or even interesting; that its dialogue drivels along so badly that the frightening effect is lost. There is no use crying "Boo" at a half-sleeping audience. The only place to enjoy a fright is the edge of a seat, and "The Cat Screams" seemed to leave its customers nearer the edge of the sidewalk.

In trying to make the hair stand on end, Mr. Beyea works over the baldest territory. His scene is an ancient house in La Jorta, Mexico, whose guests are a careful miscellany—a snake specialist and his son, a cynical young author, a pallid old maid, an old man and his young bride.

These and Madame, the landlady and her daughter, and an old crone, Micaela, who screams and falls down from time to time, saying that the cat Meura brings death to the house, are the characters. They all talk a good deal, and the cat screams.

Wrong Laughs

After Micaela's best scream, the local doctor quarantines the place and suggests all sorts of dire plagues. There is talk of a curious epidemic of suicides, and a cosmic dementia toward self-destruction caused by sunspots. The balmy old maid reads poetry, and as the young author, named Tybalt, disappears, the professor's son remembers that Shakespeare called Tybalt in "Romeo and Juliet" the prince of cats.

Out of all such stray items the author naturally hopes to induce what is referred to often in the play as a "nameless terror," but he achieved mostly rude snickers and a few wrong laughs.

The explanation for all the deaths, as reported to me by third-act spies, seems as silly as the rest of it, and a group of earnest actors, in an excellent setting by John Root, couldn't do much to hide the defects of a foolish botch.

It is easy to keep the plot's secret, for it is not worth giving away.

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
June 17, 1942

'The Cat Screams' Kills Off Several Very Good Actors

"The Cat Screams," mystery drama by Basil Beyea. Produced by Martha Hodge at the Martin Beck Theatre, New York, June 16, 1942.

★+

By BURNS MANTLE

I STAYED with "The Cat Screams" at the Martin Beck last night from 9 o'clock until 11 o'clock, but I still don't know much about it. As near as I could learn Lea Penman was running a sort of fancy boarding house in Old Mexico and selling a little dope on the side.

When the dope business went bad she took up murder. Did fairly well with murder, too, until the Mexican law caught up with her. Got rid of Harry Sheppard, Lloyd Gough and Herbert Yost in the first two acts.

She didn't do so well in the last act, because there was only one scene. She was running a little short of actors, too.

I suspect a superstition about Siamese cats had something to do with the complications. I don't know much about Siamese cats, either. Frances Lockridge tells me they never scream. And once Paul Gallico told me about one he bought for Mrs. Gallico.

When the Gallicos let that one out in a hotel room it made a beeline for the fireplace and disappeared. When it dashed out of the fireplace in the room above it scared the daylights out of a traveling salesman and darned near got Paul into a suit for damages.

"The Cat Screams" as a play is one of those labored mysteries that is never quite able to stab and hold an audience's interest, no matter how carefully staged and acted it may be.

About the middle of the evening the audience begins to snigger instead of shiver, and that is deadly in mystery play circles.

It was written by Basil Beyea, who is new to me, from a novel by Todd Downing. There was a rumor that John Patrick, who wrote one called "Hell Freezes Over" seven or eight years ago, at one time thought of working on it. Maybe Miss Penman scared him out, too.

The cast of the quick and the dead is entirely capable, including, besides those mentioned, Doris Nolan, who had her trouble with the needle as well as the heroine's role; Mildred Dunnock, a frightfully frustrated spinster; Gordon Oliver, Martin Wolfson, Cecilia Callejo, a pretty little ingenue from Puerto Rico, and Osceola Archer, who spent the evening trying to die but never quite made it.

Nice setting by John Root and such direction by Arthur Pierson as probably was to be expected. Martha Hodge, Will's daughter, is the producer. I hope she is richer for the experience.